

LAURA WATSON

Clinical Supervisor
State of Idaho Department of Corrections
Kuna

Laura Watson, clinical supervisor at the State of Idaho Department of Corrections, has a heart for people. Her compassion for individuals who are living in the most challenging of circumstances — both mentally and physically — has made her stand out in the position she has held for the last several years.

Watson received a bachelor's degree in social work with a minor in communication and went on to complete a master's degree in social work from Walla Walla College in Washington. Through all six years of college, she was on the Dean's List, and at just 26 years old, she earned her first clinical endorsement.

During the time she has spent in her current position, she has worked to establish a solid program that ensures compliance with national standards in correctional mental health care. One example of how she did this was by coordinating compliance with national standards in a 30-year-old lawsuit that involved a group of inmates versus the state of Idaho. She has also written several policies and procedures for compliance with National Commission on Correctional Health Care standards for mental health — something that has never been done in Idaho's history.

Watson is a dedicated and accomplished leader, as well. In her current role, she manages a team of 16, including 11 master's-level clinicians.

Randy Valley, deputy warden of operations at the Idaho State Correctional Institution — a 1,446-bed medium-security men's prison — said in his nomination letter for Watson: "She is a confident, dedicated, tireless worker that shows a great deal of compassion for the people in her care — both clients and staff. I have watched Laura work seamlessly with medical, security, mental health and administration to

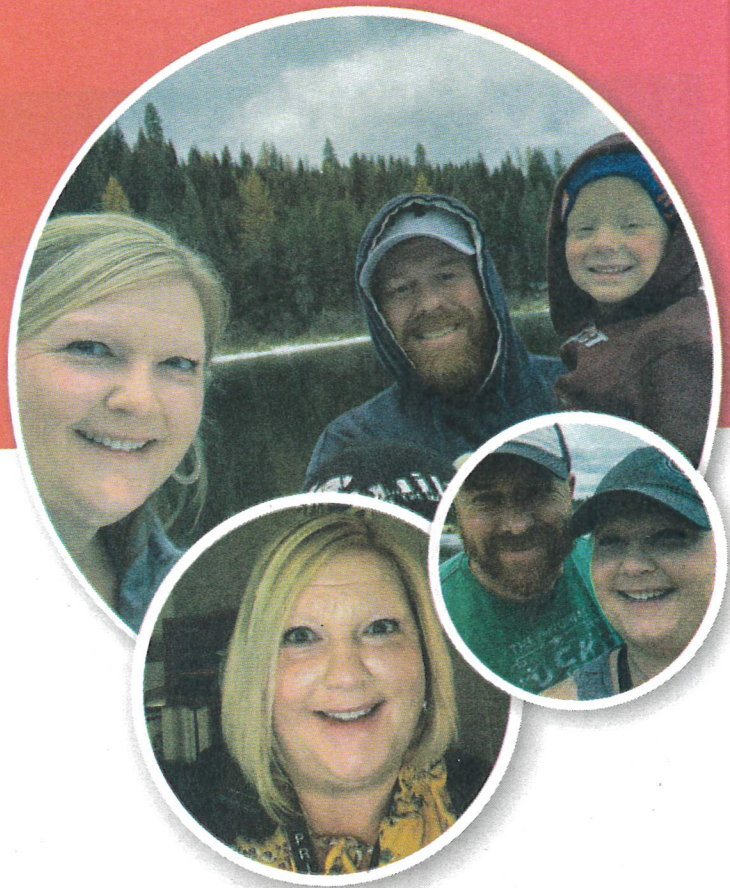
address concerns and develop comprehensive plans to manage an individual's needs. Laura has developed close working relationships with all those involved, which allows her to navigate the challenges working within a correctional environment with ease."

Watson bring a spirit of positivity to all that she does. Her motto is: "Failure only happens when you don't try."

"We have choices in life, even if we don't see them as a choice," she said. "Empower people to recognize the power of choice."

Outside of work, Watson is active in the community with her husband of 10 years and their two children. She has coached her son's soccer team for the last two years, serves as a "team mom" to several youth sports teams and is a volunteer kindergarten teacher at West Ada School District. Watson said, "I have one of the most amazing jobs because I get the opportunity to work with those that are often cast aside and forgotten. While the world may see a news story, I get to see the individual and have the opportunity to assist in both short- and long-term changes. I am humbled and honored to even be nominated as an honoree, let alone selected. I'm also appreciative to share the honor with an extremely amazing group of women."

— Brooke Strickland



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